JOHN ELDREDGE

Author of *The Journey of Desire* and Coauthor of *The Sacred Romance*



WILD *at* HEART

DISCOVERING THE SECRET *of* A MAN'S SOUL

REVISED AND EXPANDED

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

WILD *at* HEART

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WILD *at* HEART

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JOHN ELDREDGE

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For Samuel, Blaine, and Luke.

I love your warrior hearts.
You definitely have what it takes.

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Brent, for teaching me more about what it means to be a man than anyone else ever has, and Craig, for taking up the sword.

INTRODUCTION

I know. I almost want to apologize. *Dear Lord—do we really need another book for men?*

Nope. We need something else. We need *permission*.

Permission to be what we are—men made in God's image. Permission to live from the heart and not from the list of "should" and "ought to" that has left so many of us tired and bored.

Most messages for men ultimately fail. The reason is simple: they ignore what is deep and true to a man's *heart*, his real passions, and simply try to shape him up through various forms of pressure. "This is the man you *ought* to be. This is what a good husband/father/Christian/churchgoer *ought* to do." Fill in the blanks from there. He is responsible, sensitive, disciplined, faithful, diligent, dutiful, etc. Many of these are good qualities. That these messengers are well-intentioned I have no doubt. But the road to hell, as we remember, is paved with good intentions. That they are a near total failure should seem obvious by now.

No, men need something else. They need a deeper understanding of why they long for adventures and battles and a Beauty—and why God made them *just like that*. And they need a deeper understanding of why women long to be fought for, to be swept up into adventure, and to *be* the Beauty. For that is how God made them as well.

So I offer this book, not as the seven steps to being a better Christian, but as a safari of the heart to recover a life of freedom,

passion, and adventure. I believe it will help men get their heart back—and women as well. Moreover, it will help women to understand their men and help them live the life they both want. That is my prayer for you.

TEN YEARS LATER

Last week my boys—now young men—and I had reason to visit our old neighborhood and the house they grew up in and spent all their boyhood years in. It was a poignant experience. "I can't believe we used to play tag in that yard," Luke said. "It's tiny." The front yard was once a kingdom for games and battles; now it could be crossed in a few strides of their long legs. "No way," said Blaine stepping inside, "these steps were gigantic." The famous steps they used to leap from the top landing into my arms below. "I can't believe how small it all seems." You have had similar experiences—places and people that once loomed mythic lose their granduer when we return to them at a different time, in a different state of mind.

I feared such would happen when I reopened the pages of this book.

It is ten years since I wrote *Wild at Heart*. A lot of water has passed under the bridge. My boys are off at college now. The lines in my face have deepened. I've logged a lot of miles with men in this time. I have more than a few new scars. Would I still believe what I wrote? Would it have proven true in the ten rugged years since I set these thoughts down?

The answer is—more so.

It is actually *truer*, if such a thing can be, far truer than I knew as a younger man. It rings eternal, and universal. God was in it then; he is in it still.

Jesus gave us a beautiful and simple test for the measure of

anything when he said, almost offhand, "You will know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:16 NASB). A cut-to-the-chase test. You can hold it up to reveal a church, movement, man, or nation. What is the fruit? What does it leave in its wake? I've found it an immediate and revealing test.

And I am humbled to say, the fruit of this little book has been, well, unlike anything I've ever seen. Utterly phenomenal. It has healed the lives of prisoners in Colombia, set the hearts of Catholic priests free in Slovakia. It has reached the halls of Congress and the back rooms of homeless shelters, restored the families of men in Australia, launched a movement of freedom and redemption in men around the world. *It works*. But you needn't take my word for it. Come and see for yourself.

I have tried to bring to this tenth anniversary edition the lessons we have learned since the book's release, tried to clarify issues that brought confusion, and most importantly, added the practical guidance men need to realize the promise of this book. You will want to know that I also wrote a Field Manual to go along with it, a guided workbook that will deepen and ensure your experience with God here. Many men have found it helpful. We also created a DVD series that men have used in small "bands of brothers" with tremendous results.

May God find you through these pages, and restore you as his man.

John Eldredge
Colorado, 2010

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly . . . who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

—TEDDY ROOSEVELT

The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.

—MATTHEW 11:12 NASB

Chapter One

WILD AT HEART

The heart of a man is like deep water . . .

—Proverbs 20:5 NKJV

The spiritual life cannot be made suburban. It is always frontier, and we who live in it must accept and even rejoice that it remains untamed.

—Howard Macey

I want to ride to the ridge where the west commences
I can't look at hobbles and I can't stand fences
Don't fence me in.

—Cole Porter
"Don't Fence Me In"

At last, I am surrounded by wilderness. The wind in the top of the pines behind me sounds like the ocean. Waves are rushing in from the great blue above, cresting upon the ridge of the mountain I have climbed, somewhere in the Sawatch Range of central Colorado. Spreading out below me the landscape is a sea of sagebrush for mile after lonesome mile. Zane Grey immortalized it as the purple sage, but most of the year it's more of a silver gray. This is the kind of country you could ride across for days on horseback without seeing another living soul. Today, I am on foot. Though the sun is shining this afternoon, it will not warm above thirty here near the Continental Divide, and the sweat I worked up scaling this face is now making me shiver. It is late October and winter is coming on. In the distance, nearly a hundred miles south by southwest, the San Juan Mountains are already covered in snow.

The aroma of the pungent sage still clings to my jeans, and it clears my head as I gasp for air—in notably short supply at 10,000 feet. I am forced to rest again, even though I know that each pause broadens the distance between me and my quarry. Still, the advantage has always been his. Though the tracks I found this morning were fresh—only a few hours old—that holds little promise. A bull elk can easily cover miles of rugged country in that amount of time, especially if he is wounded or on the run.

The wapiti, as the Indians called him, is one of the most elusive creatures we have left in the lower forty-eight. They are the ghost kings of the high country, more cautious and wary than

deer, and more difficult to track. They live at higher elevations, and travel farther in a day, than nearly any other game. The bulls especially seem to carry a sixth sense to human presence. A few times I've gotten close; the next moment they are gone, vanishing silently into aspen groves so thick you wouldn't have believed a rabbit could get through.

It wasn't always this way. For centuries elk lived out on the prairies, grazing together on the rich grasses in vast numbers. In the spring of 1805 Meriwether Lewis described passing herds lolling about in the thousands as he made his way in search of a Northwest Passage. At times the curious wandered so close he could throw sticks at them, like bucolic dairy cows blocking the road. But by the end of the century westward expansion had pushed the elk high up into the Rocky Mountains. Now they are elusive, hiding out at timberline like outlaws until heavy snows force them down for the winter. If you would seek them now, it is on their terms, in forbidding haunts well beyond the reach of civilization.

And that is why I come.

And why I linger here still, letting the old bull get away. My hunt, you see, actually has little to do with elk. I knew that before I came. There is something else I am after, out here in the wild. I am searching for an even more elusive prey . . . something that can only be found through the help of wilderness.

I am looking for my heart.

WILD AT HEART

> This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD

> God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground—the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. (Gen. 2:4-8)

Eve was created within the lush beauty of Eden's garden. But Adam, if you'll notice, was created from the earth itself, from the clay. In the record of our beginnings, the second chapter of Genesis makes it clear: man was born from the outback, from the untamed part of creation. Afterward he is brought to Eden. And ever since then boys have never been at home indoors, and men have had an insatiable longing to explore. We long to return; it's when most men come alive. As John Muir said, when a man comes to the mountains, he comes home. The core of a man's heart is undomesticated *and that is good*. "I am not alive in an office," as one Northface ad has it. "I am not alive in a taxi cab. I am not alive on a sidewalk." Amen to that. Their conclusion? "Never stop exploring."

My gender seems to need little encouragement. It comes naturally, like our innate love of maps. In 1260 Marco Polo headed off to find China, and in 1967, when I was seven, I tried to dig a hole straight through from our backyard with my friend Danny Wilson. We gave up at about eight feet, but it made a great fort. Hannibal crosses his famous Alps, and there comes a day in a boy's life when he first crosses the street and enters the company of the great explorers. Scott and Amundsen race for the South Pole, Peary and Cook vie for the North, and when last summer I gave my boys some loose change and permission to ride their bikes down to the store to buy a soda, you'd have

thought I'd given them a charter to go find the equator. Magellan sails due west, around the tip of South America—despite warnings that he and his crew will drop off the end of the earth—and Huck Finn heads off down the Mississippi ignoring similar threats. Powell follows the Colorado into the Grand Canyon, even though—no, *because*—no one has done it before and everyone is saying it can't be done.

And so my boys and I stood on the bank of the Snake River in the spring of '98, feeling that ancient urge to shove off. Snow melt was high that year, unusually high, and the river had overflowed its banks and was surging through the trees on both sides. Out in the middle of the river, which is crystal clear in late summer but that day looked like chocolate milk, logs were floating down, large tangles of branches bigger than a car, and who knows what else. High and muddy and fast, the Snake was forbidding. No other rafters could be seen. Did I mention it was raining? But we had a brand-new canoe and the paddles were in hand and, sure, I have never floated the Snake in a canoe, nor any other river for that matter, but what the heck. We jumped in and headed off into the unknown, like Livingstone plunging into the interior of dark Africa.

Adventure, with all its requisite danger and wildness, is a deeply spiritual longing written into the soul of man. The masculine heart needs a place where nothing is prefabricated, modular, nonfat, zip lock, franchised, on-line, microwavable. Where there are no deadlines, cell phones, or committee meetings. Where there is room for the soul. Where, finally, the geography around us corresponds to the geography of our heart. Look at the heroes of the biblical text: Moses does not encounter the living God at the mall. He finds him (or is found by him) somewhere out in the deserts of Sinai, a long way from the comforts of Egypt. The same is true of Jacob, who has his wrestling match

with God not on the living room sofa but in a wadi somewhere east of the Jabbok, in Mesopotamia. Where did the great prophet Elijah go to recover his strength? To the wild. As did John the Baptist, and his cousin, Jesus, who is *led by the Spirit* into the wilderness.

Whatever else those explorers were after, they were also searching for themselves. Deep in a man's heart are some fundamental questions that simply cannot be answered at the kitchen table. Who am I? What am I made of? What am I destined for? It is fear that keeps a man at home where things are neat and orderly *and under his control*. But the answers to his deepest questions are not to be found on television or in the refrigerator. Out there on the burning desert sands, lost in a trackless waste, Moses received his life's mission and purpose. He is called out, called up into something much bigger than he ever imagined, much more serious than CEO or "prince of Egypt." Under foreign stars, in the dead of night, Jacob received a new name, his real name. No longer is he a shrewd business negotiator, but now he is one who wrestles with God. The wilderness trial of Christ is, at its core, a test of his *identity*. "If you are who you think you are . . ." If a man is ever to find out who he is and what he's here for, he has got to take that journey for himself.

He has got to get his heart back.

WESTWARD EXPANSION AGAINST THE SOUL

The way a man's life unfolds nowadays tends to drive his heart into remote regions of the soul. Endless hours at a computer screen; selling shoes at the mall; meetings, memos, phone calls. The business world—where the majority of American men live and die—requires a man to be efficient and punctual. Corporate policies and procedures are designed with one aim: to harness

a man to the plow and make him produce. But the soul refuses to be harnessed; it knows nothing of Day Timers and deadlines and P&L statements. The soul longs for passion, for freedom, for *life*. As D. H. Lawrence said, "I am not a mechanism." A man needs to feel the rhythms of the earth; he needs to have in hand something real—the tiller of a boat, a set of reins, the roughness of rope, or simply a shovel. Can a man live all his days to keep his fingernails clean and trim? Is that what a boy dreams of?

Society at large can't make up its mind about men. Having spent the last thirty years redefining masculinity into something more sensitive, safe, manageable and, well, feminine, it now berates men for not being men. Boys will be boys, they sigh. As though if a man were to truly grow up he would forsake wilderness and wanderlust and settle down, be at home forever in Aunt Polly's parlor. "Where are all the *real* men?" is regular fare for talk shows and new books. *You asked them to be women*, I want to say. The result is a gender confusion never experienced at such a wide level in the history of the world. How can a man know he is one when his highest aim is minding his manners?

And then, alas, there is the church. Christianity, as it currently exists, has done damage to masculinity. When all is said and done, I think most men in the church believe that God put them on the earth to be a good boy. The problem with men, we are told, is that they don't know how to keep their promises, be spiritual leaders, talk to their wives, or raise their children. But, if they will try real hard they can reach the lofty summit of becoming . . . a nice guy. That's what we hold up as models of Christian maturity: Really Nice Guys. We don't smoke, drink, or swear; that's what makes us *men*. Now let me ask my male readers: in all your boyhood dreams growing up, did you ever dream of becoming a Nice Guy? (Ladies, was the prince of your dreams dashing . . . or merely nice?)

Really now—do I overstate my case? Walk into most churches in America, have a look around, and ask yourself this question: What is a Christian man? Don't listen to what is said, look at what you find there. There is no doubt about it. You'd have to admit a Christian man is . . . bored. At a recent church retreat I was talking with a guy in his fifties, listening really, about his own journey as a man. "I've pretty much tried for the last twenty years to be a good man as the church defines it." Intrigued, I asked him to say what he thought that was. He paused for a long moment. "Dutiful," he said. "And separated from his heart." *A perfect description,* I thought. *Sadly right on the mark.*

As Robert Bly laments in *Iron John*, "Some women want a passive man if they want a man at all; the church wants a tamed man—they are called priests; the university wants a domesticated man—they are called tenure-track people; the corporation wants a . . . sanitized, hairless, shallow man." It all comes together as a sort of westward expansion against the masculine soul. And thus the *heart* of a man is driven into the high country, into remote places, like a wounded animal looking for cover. Women know this, and lament that they have no access to their man's heart. Men know it, too, but are often unable to explain why their heart is missing. They know their heart is on the run, but they often do not know where to pick up the trail. The church wags its head and wonders why it can't get more men to sign up for its programs. The answer is simply this: we have not invited a man to know and live from his deep heart.

AN INVITATION

But God made the masculine heart, set it within every man, and thereby offers him an *invitation:* Come, and live out what I meant you to be. Permit me to bypass the entire nature vs. nurture "is

gender really built-in?" debate with one simple observation: men and women are made in the image of God *as men* or *as women*. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). Male and female. Now, we know God doesn't have a body, so the uniqueness can't be physical. Gender simply must be at the level of the soul, in the deep and everlasting places within us. God doesn't make generic people; he makes something very distinct—a man or a woman. In other words, there is a masculine heart and a feminine heart, which in their own ways reflect or portray to the world God's heart.

God *meant* something when he meant man, and if we are to ever find ourselves we must find that. What has he set in the masculine heart? Instead of asking what you think you ought to do to become a better man (or woman, for my female readers), I want to ask, *What makes you come alive?* What stirs your heart? The journey we face now is into a land foreign to most of us. We must head into country that has no clear trail. This charter for exploration takes us into our own hearts, into our deepest desires. As the playwright Christopher Fry says,

> Life is a hypocrite if I can't live
> The way it moves me!

There are three desires I find written so deeply into my heart I know now I can no longer disregard them without losing my soul. They are core to who and what I am and yearn to be. I gaze into boyhood, I search the pages of Scripture, of literature, I listen carefully to many, many men, and I am convinced these desires are universal, a clue into masculinity itself. They may be misplaced, forgotten, or misdirected, but in the heart of every man is a desperate desire for a battle to fight, an adventure to

live, and a beauty to rescue. I want you to think of the films men love, the things they do with their free time, and especially the aspirations of little boys and see if I am not right on this.

A BATTLE TO FIGHT

There's a photo on my wall of a little boy about five years old, with a crew cut, big cheeks, and an impish grin. It's an old photograph, and the color is fading, but the image is timeless. It's Christmas morning, 1964, and I've just opened what may have been the best present any boy received on any Christmas ever—a set of two pearl-handed six-shooters, complete with black leather holsters, a red cowboy shirt with two wild mustangs embroidered on either breast, shiny black boots, red bandanna, and straw hat. I've donned the outfit and won't take it off for weeks because, you see, this is not a "costume" at all; it's an *identity*. Sure, one pant leg is tucked into my boot and the other is hanging out, but that only adds to my "fresh off the trail" persona. My thumbs are tucked inside my gun belt and my chest is out because I am armed and dangerous. Bad guys beware: this town's not big enough for the both of us.

Capes and swords, camouflage, bandannas and six-shooters—these are the *uniforms* of boyhood. Little boys yearn to know they are powerful, they are dangerous, they are someone to be reckoned with. How many parents have tried in vain to prevent little Timmy from playing with guns? Give it up. If you do not supply a boy with weapons, he will make them from whatever materials are at hand. My boys chew their graham crackers into the shape of hand guns at the breakfast table. Every stick or fallen branch is a spear, or better, a bazooka. Despite what many modern educators would say, this is not a psychological disturbance brought on by violent television or chemical imbalance. Aggression is

part of the masculine *design*; we are hardwired for it. If we believe that man is made in the image of God, then we would do well to remember that "the LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name" (Ex. 15:3). God is a warrior; man is a warrior.

Little girls do not invent games where large numbers of people die, where bloodshed is a prerequisite for having fun. Hockey, for example, was not a feminine creation. Nor was boxing. A boy wants to attack something—and so does a man, even if it's only a little white ball on a tee. He wants to whack it into kingdom come. On the other hand, my boys do not sit down to tea parties. They do not call their friends on the phone to talk about relationships. They grow bored of games that have no element of danger or competition or bloodshed. Cooperative games based on "relational interdependence" are complete nonsense. "No one is killed?" they ask, incredulous. "No one wins? What's the point?" Look at the global popularity of the Xbox games boys and men play; they are overwhelmingly games of battle. The universal nature of this ought to have convinced us by now: The boy is a warrior; the boy is his name. And those are not boyish antics he is doing. When boys play at war they are rehearsing their part in a much bigger drama. One day, you just might need that boy to defend you.

Those Union soldiers who charged the stone walls at Bloody Angle; the Allied troops that hit the beaches at Normandy or the sands of Iwo Jima—what would they have done without this deep part of their heart? Life *needs* a man to be fierce—and fiercely devoted. The wounds he will take throughout his life will cause him to lose heart if all he has been trained to be is soft. This is especially true in the murky waters of relationships, where a man feels least prepared to advance. As Bly says, "In every relationship something *fierce* is needed once in a while."

Now, this longing may have submerged from years of neglect, and a man may not feel that he is up to the battles he knows await him. Or it may have taken a very dark turn, as it has with inner-city gangs. But the desire is there. Every man wants to play the hero. Every man *needs* to know that he is powerful. Women didn't make *Braveheart* one of the best-selling films of the decade. *Flying Tigers*, *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, *The Magnificent Seven*, *Shane*, *High Noon*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Top Gun*, the *Die Hard* films, *Gladiator*—the movies a man loves reveal what his heart longs for, what is set inside him from the day of his birth.

Like it or not, there is something fierce in the heart of every man. Every man.

AN ADVENTURE TO LIVE

"My mother loves to go to Europe on her vacations." We were talking about our love of the West, a friend and I, and why he moved out here from the East Coast. "And that's okay for her, I guess. There's a lot of culture there. But I need wildness." Our conversation was stirred by the film *Legends of the Fall*, the story of three young men coming of age in the early 1900s on their father's ranch in Montana. Alfred, the eldest, is practical, pragmatic, cautious. He heads off to the Big City to become a businessman and eventually, a politician. Yet something inside him dies. He becomes a hollow man. Samuel, the youngest, is still a boy in many ways, a tender child—literate, sensitive, timid. He is killed early in the film and we know he was not ready for battle.

Then there is Tristan, the middle son. He is wild at heart. It is Tristan who embodies the West—he catches and rides the wild stallion, fights the grizzly with a knife, and wins the beautiful woman. I have yet to meet a man who wants to be Alfred or

Samuel. I've yet to meet a woman who wants to marry one. There's a reason the American cowboy has taken on mythic proportions. He embodies a yearning every man knows from very young—to "go West," to find a place where he can be all he knows he was meant to be. To borrow Walter Brueggemann's description of God: "wild, dangerous, unfettered and free."

Now, let me stop for a moment and make something clear. I am no great white hunter. I have no dead animals adorning the walls of my house. I didn't play college football. In fact, in college I weighed 135 pounds and wasn't much of an athlete. Despite my childhood dreams, I have never been a race car driver or a fighter pilot. I have no interest in televised sports. (Okay, except March Madness.) I don't like cheap beer, and though I do drive an old jeep, its tires are not ridiculously large. I say this because I anticipate that many readers—good men and women—will be tempted to dismiss this as some sort of macho-man pep rally. Not at all. *Wild at Heart* is not about becoming a lumberjack. I am simply searching, as many men (and hopeful women) are, for an authentic masculinity.

When winter fails to provide an adequate snow base, my boys bring their sleds in the house and ride them down the stairs. Just the other day, my wife found them with a rope out their second-story bedroom window, preparing to rappel down the side of the house. The recipe for fun is pretty simple raising boys: add to any activity an element of danger, stir in a little exploration, add a dash of destruction, and you've got yourself a winner. The way they ski is a perfect example. Get to the top of the highest run, point your skis straight downhill and go, the faster the better. And this doesn't end with age; the stakes simply get higher.

A judge in his sixties, a real southern gentleman with a pin-striped suit and an elegant manner of speech, pulled me aside

during a conference. Quietly, almost apologetically, he spoke of his love for sailing, for the open sea, and how he and a buddy eventually built their own boat. Then came a twinkle in his eye. "We were sailing off the coast of Bermuda a few years ago, when we were hit by a northeaster (a raging storm). Really, it came up out of nowhere. Twenty-foot swells in a thirty-foot homemade boat. I thought we were all going to die." A pause for dramatic effect, and then he confessed, "It was the best time of my life."

Compare your experience watching the latest James Bond or Indiana Jones thriller with, say, going to Bible study. The guaranteed success of each new release makes it clear—adventure is written into the heart of a man. And it's not just about having "fun." Adventure *requires* something of us, puts us to the test. Though we may fear the test, at the same time we yearn to be tested, to discover that we have what it takes. That's why we set off down the Snake River against all sound judgment, why a buddy and I pressed on through grizzly country to find good fishing, why I went off to Washington, D.C., as a young man to see if I could make it in those shark-infested waters. If a man has lost this desire, says he doesn't want it, that's only because he doesn't know he has what it takes, believes that he will fail the test. And so he decides it's better not to try. For reasons I hope to make clear later, most men hate the unknown and, like Cain, want to settle down and build their own city, get on top of their life.

But you can't escape it—there is something wild in the heart of every man.

A BEAUTY TO RESCUE

Romeo has his Juliet, King Arthur fights for Guinevere, Robin rescues Maid Marian, and I will never forget the first time I kissed my grade school sweetheart. It was in the fall of my seventh-

grade year. I met Debbie in drama class, and fell absolutely head over heels. It was classic puppy love: I'd wait for her after rehearsals were over, carry her books back to her locker. We passed notes in class, talked on the phone at night. I had never paid girls much attention, really, until now. This desire awakens a bit later in a boy's journey to manhood, but when it does his universe turns on its head. Anyway, I longed to kiss her but just couldn't work up the courage—until the last night of the school play. The next day was summer vacation, she was going away, and I knew it was now or never. Backstage, in the dark, I slipped her a quick kiss and she returned a longer one. Do you remember the scene from the movie *E.T.*, where the boy flies across the moon on his bike? Though I rode my little Schwinn home that night, I'm certain I never touched the ground.

There is nothing so inspiring to a man as a beautiful woman. She'll make you want to charge the castle, slay the giant, leap across the parapets. Or maybe, hit a home run. One day during a Little League game, my son Samuel was so inspired. He likes baseball, but most boys starting out aren't sure they really have it in them to be a great player. Sam's our firstborn, and like so many firstborns he is cautious. He always lets a few pitches go by before he takes a swing, and when he does, it's never a full swing; every one of his hits up till this point were in the infield. Anyway, just as Sam steps up to bat this one afternoon, his friend from down the street, a cute little blonde girl, shows up along the first-base line. Standing up on tiptoe she yells out his name and waves to Sam. Pretending he doesn't notice her, he broadens his stance, grips the bat a little tighter, looks at the pitcher with something fierce in his eye. First one over the plate he knocks into center field.

A man wants to be the hero to the beauty. Young men going off to war carry a photo of their sweetheart in their wallet. Men who fly combat missions will paint a beauty on the side of their

aircraft; the crews of the WWII B-17 bomber gave those flying fortresses names like *Me and My Gal* or the *Memphis Belle.* What would Robin Hood or King Arthur be without the woman they love? Lonely men fighting lonely battles. Indiana Jones and James Bond just wouldn't be the same without a beauty at their side, and inevitably they must fight for her. You see, it's not just that a man needs a battle to fight; he needs someone to fight *for*. Remember Nehemiah's words to the few brave souls defending a wall-less Jerusalem? "Don't be afraid . . . fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes." The battle itself is never enough; a man yearns for romance. It's not enough to be a hero; it's that he is a hero *to someone* in particular, to the woman he loves. Adam was given the wind and the sea, the horse and the hawk, but as God himself said, things were just not right until there was Eve.

Yes, there is something passionate in the heart of every man.

THE FEMININE HEART

There are also three desires that I have found essential to a woman's heart, which are not entirely different from a man's and yet they remain distinctly feminine. Not every woman wants a battle to fight, but every woman yearns to be fought *for*. Listen to the longing of a woman's heart: she wants to be more than noticed—she wants to be *wanted*. She wants to be pursued. "I just want to be a priority to someone," a friend in her thirties told me. And her childhood dreams of a knight in shining armor coming to rescue her are not girlish fantasies; they are the core of the feminine heart and the life she knows she was made for. So Zach comes back for Paula in *An Officer and a Gentleman,* Frederick comes back for Jo in *Little Women*, and Edward returns to pledge his undying love for Eleanor in *Sense and Sensibility*.

Every woman also wants an adventure *to share*. One of my wife's favorite films is *The Man from Snowy River*. She loves the scene where Jessica, the beautiful young heroine, is rescued by Jim, her hero, and together they ride on horseback through the wilds of the Australian wilderness. "I want to be Isabo in *Ladyhawk*," confessed another female friend. "To be cherished, pursued, fought for—yes. But also, I want to be strong and a *part* of the adventure." So many men make the mistake of thinking that the woman *is* the adventure. But that is where the relationship immediately goes downhill. A woman doesn't want to be the adventure; she wants to be caught up into something greater than herself. Our friend went on to say, "I know myself and I know I'm not the adventure. So when a man makes me the point, I grow bored immediately. I know that story. Take me into one I don't know."

And finally, every woman wants to have a beauty to unveil. Not to conjure, but to unveil. Most women feel the pressure to be beautiful from very young, but that is not what I speak of. There is also a deep desire to simply and truly *be* the beauty, and be delighted in. Most little girls will remember playing dress up, or wedding day, or "twirling skirts," those flowing dresses that were perfect for spinning around in. She'll put her pretty dress on, come into the living room and twirl. What she longs for is to capture her daddy's delight. My wife remembers standing on top of the coffee table as a girl of five or six, and singing her heart out. *Do you see me?* asks the heart of every girl. *And are you captivated by what you see?*

The world kills a woman's heart when it tells her to be tough, efficient, and independent. Sadly, Christianity has missed her heart as well. Walk into most churches in America, have a look around, and ask yourself this question: What is a Christian woman? Again, don't listen to what is said, look at what you find

there. There is no doubt about it. You'd have to admit a Christian woman is . . . tired. All we've offered the feminine soul is pressure to "be a good servant." No one is fighting for her heart; there is no grand adventure to be swept up in; and every woman doubts very much that she has any beauty to unveil.

BY WAY OF THE HEART

Which would you rather be said of you: "Harry? Sure I know him. He's a real sweet guy." Or, "Yes, I know about Harry. He's a dangerous man . . . in a really good way." Ladies, how about you? Which man would you rather have as your mate? (Some women, hurt by masculinity gone bad, might argue for the "safe" man . . . and then wonder why, years later, there is no passion in their marriage, why he is distant and cold.) And as for your own femininity, which would you rather have said of you—that you are a "tireless worker," or that you are a "captivating woman"? I rest my case.

What if? What if those deep desires in our hearts are telling us the truth, revealing to us the life we were *meant* to live? God gave us eyes so that we might see; he gave us ears that we might hear; he gave us wills that we might choose, and he gave us hearts that we might *live*. The way we handle the heart is everything. A man must *know* he is powerful; he must *know* he has what it takes. A woman must *know* she is beautiful; she must *know* she is worth fighting for. "But you don't understand," said one woman to me. "I'm living with a hollow man." No, it's in there. His heart is there. It may have evaded you, like a wounded animal, always out of reach, one step beyond your catching. But it's there. "I don't know when I died," said another man. "But I feel like I'm just using up oxygen." I understand. Your heart may feel dead and gone, but it's there. Something wild and strong and valiant, just waiting to be released.

And so this is not a book about the seven things a man ought to do to be a nicer guy. It is a book about the recovery and release of a man's heart, his passions, his true nature, which he has been given by God. It's an invitation to rush the fields at Bannockburn, to go West, to leap from the falls and save the beauty. For if you are going to know who you truly are *as a man*, if you are going to find a life worth living, if you are going to love a woman deeply and not pass on your confusion to your children, you simply must get your heart back. You must head up into the high country of the soul, into wild and uncharted regions and track down that elusive prey.